PREFACE

M. N. Roy and Mahatma Gandhi symbolised two opposite poles in India's political spectrum. While Roy stood for modernization, which in essence meant Westernization, of Indian society and politics, Gandhi stood for the established Indian social order. As early as 1924 Gandhi wrote an article in *Young India* criticising Communism, or what he termed Bolshevism, as enunciated by Roy, Though he later published a rejoinder to that article by M. N. Roy in January 1925, he reiterated in an editorial note his differences with Roy's ideas.

During his discussions with Lenin on the eve of the Second Congress of the Communist International, the role of Gandhi in Indian politics was the crucial point of M. N. Roy's difference with Lenin. In that discussion Roy maintained that as a religious-cultural revivalist Gandhi was bound to be socially reactionary, however revolutionary he might appear politically.

Roy also criticised Gandhian method in Indian politics in the book he jointly wrote with his first wife, Evelyn Trent, in 1923. The book was titled *One year of Non-Cooperation from Ahmdebad to Gaya.*

The Roy-Gandhi differences, and also the opposition of the Gandhian lobby to Roy was evident from that early period. Thus when Jaya Prakash Narayan, while a student in USA, came under Roy's influence and wanted to go to the Soviet Union to study Communism and revolutionary tactics at the newly opened Eastern University, his relatives persuaded Dr. Rajendra Prasad, also a relation, already a prominent Gandhian leader in the Congress, to dissuade him.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad in a long letter appealed to Jaya Prakash's "nationalist, as opposed to internationalist, spirit" and warned that "knowing how the British confiscated and destroyed the writings of M. N. Roy" he may also not be allowed to return to India by the British authorities. (Vide : Allan and Wendy Scarfe, *J. P. His Biography;* Orient Longmans, 1975; pp. 55-59). It worked and Jaya Prakash did not go to Moscow.

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M. N. Roy's first encounter with the Mahatma was during the Faizpur session of the Congress. Again, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Patel on behalf of Gandhi offered Roy all financial support and position as the leftist leader in the Congress as the alternative Jawaharlal Nehru on condition that he accepts the overall leadership of Gandhi. Roy refused the offer and informed Nehru of the game being played behind his back. Later, Roy met Gandhi. Intercepting the discussion Gandhi invited Roy to join him in the daily prayer meeting. Roy refused and waited till the prayer was over. The two did not agree on the question of the status of the workers and peasants on the political programme. Besides, Gandhi's politics did not sound commendable to Roy in relation to raising the social and intellectual level of the Indian people.

After his release from jail Roy had written a letter to Gandhi on the latter's advocacy of celibacy. That was Roy's first letter to Gandhi, which the latter prefered not to answer. Roy however kept on writing in his own journal about the inadequacies of Gandhi's thought in the light of modern scientific development.

Yet Roy appreciated certain aspects of Gandhi's political technique and commended him for his arousing the masses in the cause of national freedom. The third appendix included in this small book also shows how Roy appreciated Gandhi's sincere effort in the cause of communal harmony when the country was going through the worst holocaust of communal disturbances and killings at the time of partition of the country and the transfer of power.

This small book is a collection of published articles discussing certain aspects of Gandhi-Roy differences. It is certainly not comprehensive, and hopefully may generate thought and more serious discussions.

July 25th, 1987

SAMAREN ROY

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INTRODUCTION :

DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL PERSONALITY

[M. N. Roy, son of a village school teacher, left India in 1915 to negotiate arms deal with the Germans for an insurrection in India. He did not return to India until, after his expulsion from the Comintern, in 1930. Meanwhile he had founded two Communist Parties, the Mexican in 1919 and the Indian in 1920, and had become a leading theoretician in the Communist International, and its chief agent in the abortive communist revolution in China in 1927.

However Roy became a non-person in Indian politics when in July 1940 he raised his lone voice of protest and condemnation against Nazi aggression in France. He was expelled from the Indian National Congress, the party he had joined after his release from a six-year term in jail in India for organizing a nation-wide demonstration. By the time he died in poverty in January 1954 he was a forgotten man. No other Indian, I think, had dedicated his life in such totality to internationalism and European culture.]

'A biographic study of M. N. Roy cannot be a mere chronicle of events, or a story of the role played by him in diverse countries and situations, or a vindication of the strategy and tactics he had ad-

vocated at different times. Ideas—his, of those he clashed with, and of the age—have a significance which has to be accorded proper significance. The events of Roy's life or in other words, his behavior, the manner in which he acted or reacted to developments, were to a great extent determined by the ideas he held at the time of a particular decision taken by him. Ideas and events are intertwined. He was not a successful man, if he had acted differently from his ideas he would have been an opportunist; if he had refused to revise his opinions he would have been dogmatic and unrealistic.

Broadly speaking the ideas of M. N. Roy grew out of a desire to free his country—a natural desire, but initially pursued with a fanatical devotion to the belief that Hindu culture was superior to the Western. The belief did not arise out of primitive xonophobia, or out of the feeling of dispossession which members of a displaced bureaucracy, priestly class or a feudal land holding or rural group might have had. Roy did not belong to any such group, though his family looked after a small temple to goddess Kali,[1] in which vocation they had not been disturbed in any way by British conquest.

On the other hand he belonged to a group which had much to look forward to. English education had opened avenues of advancement which had been absent earlier. In fact the group disliked the earlier rulers, Muslims, more than the British, and the displacement of Muslims by the British had probably seemed a deliverance. There was a doubt as to whether *Ananda Math*[2], the book

Roy's terrorist group looked into for inspiration, was aimed at freedom from Muslims or the British.

The social milieu from which Roy came had remained apathetic, if not hostile, to the 1857 uprising in the British Indian army[3]. The soldiery and its leaders had little in common with the Bengalis, the group Roy belonged to. The feudal potentates on whose behalf the soldiery had risen seemed remote to English-educated Bengalis and did not excite sympathy[4].

The Bengalis of the upper castes had advanced rapidly and made much of the opportunities British rule had brought. They had entered the professions, the lower rungs of bureaucracy in large numbers, and a select few had found their way into the highest elite bureaucratic core—not through class affiliation but on merit. In Roy's youth only the indolent believed that merit went unrewarded, and Roy was not indolent.

We have to look elsewhere for the motivation of his nationalism. One was the lack of equality between the English-educated Bengalis and the British, even if the latter were hardly educated. This touched the Bengali self-esteem, and theirs had been a demand for equality,—for careers being more open to talent than it was. This was in fact the motivation which drove Surendranth Banerjee to launch the nationalist political agitation in 1870s; and Roy had begun his active political life by associating with Surendranath Banerjee in the anti-partition movement of 1905 for which he was expelled from the school.

The initial motivating factor of Roy's nationa-

lism could be Brahmanism. In fact even in his later life he occassionally referred to his Brahmanic pride and heritage, and one of his later American friends, Prof. Richard Park wrote to me as late as 1979 that Roy probably retained his earlier Bengali Brahmanic attitude.

Throughout Indian history Brahmins had not only exercised superiority over those below them but also a ritual superiority over the rulers. The Hindu rulers had conceded it from the 4th Century A.D.; the Muslims had respected them though not conceding superiority. The British attitude was roughly the same as of the Muslims, but the 18th century discovery that Sanskrit (the language of the Brahmins) was etymologically close to European classical and modern languages had led to a sentiment best expressed by the phrase, "the Aryan brother". On the European part Aryanism had roots in anti-Semitic emotions, on the Brahmin as satisfying the desire for equality.

Europe's Oriental Renaissance extended a patronage to Hindu culture and civilization that encouraged aspirations for a share in the governance of the country. It was not a democratic aspiration, but of a hierarchical group, which was recapitulating an earlier phase in its life. Lacking as the Bengali Brahmin at the close of the 19th century was in military power the aspiration had to find expression through assumption of cultural superiority. The Brahmins held much land, both in Bengal and outside, but the days of feudal recapture of power were gone. The 1857 uprising had proved that. Claims of cultural superiority had to be made in opposition

to the reality of economic and military inferiority, and so the convenient theory that Hindu culture was spiritually superior to the European which was better in material aspects.

All claims of superiority need the backing of economic or military power. The Muslim refusal to concede the superiority to the Brahmins was possible through use of violence—something which the Rajputs could never do because violence against Brahmins was sin. In the British refusal too, the same resort to violence was always a distinct probability. The logical corollary of the situation was the Brahmin taking to arms—not as a caste or class for which territorial and economic base was required, but as individuals and in small groups. That was the basis of terrorism.

Roy joined a terrorist group, and this group worked for an armed uprising. The arms were to come from Germany. It was not only a question of my enemy's enemy is my friend, but through the nineteenth century a cultural affinity with Germany had been built up. This affinity often cropped up in Roy's dealings with the Germans.

It is also possible to see a connection between a terrorist group and an elitist Communist Party which was the Leninist innovation in Marxism. The party was of individuals, intellectual, determined; disciplined and committed who adopt the interest of a numerically larger section of the population, even when that section was not fully aware of its own interests or has not been aroused.

The revolutionary element steps in here. Reformism could wait for the sectional interests to

develop, for the section to be aware of its interest, which would create the sanction for a change. The terrorists had undertaken the task in the name of the nation—a nation which was more a cultural-geographical entity than an ethnic or linguistic homogeneous group. The development of the terrorist into a revolutionary in Roy was facilitated by two events. Following his secret escape from India in 1915 in search of arms Roy landed in America in the middle of 1916 on his way to Berlin to finalise the arms deal he had negotiated in China through Sun yat-Sen. Before he could go to Berlin, America joined the war and Roy was arrested in New York in March 1917 whereupon he jumped bail and fled to Mexico.

Thus Roy had been cut off from India, and could not come back, and there was no scope for conspiratorial activity in Mexico. The German connection continued but it did not call for any immediate action. It had lost its urgency. Second, the death of Jatin Mukherjee, the supreme leader of Roy's revolutionary group, had freed Roy of obligations he had made to that leader before his departure from India. The terrorist affiliation also lost its urgency. This lack of urgency gave time for thought. In Mexico, as a matter of fact, every one was biding for time; even the Germans. That was a period of relaxed rumination.

While in America Roy came across people who became his friends and were not bound by territorial or nationalist loyalties—people like Dr. David Starr Jordan, Chancellor of Stanford University, who gave him introduction to a personal but powerful friend in Mexico in case Roy had to take shelter there; Prof.

Arthur Upham Pope of Berkeley who staked his job to become friendly with Roy and be his liaison in US after Roy had escaped to Mexico, and finally Evelyn Trent, a phi beta kappa graduate of Stanford who sacrificed her life of affluence to become Roy's wife and collaborator.

In Mexico, Maestro Casas, Chancellor of the University, who took a great liking for Roy, acted as the catalyst when he declared that "It would do India no end of good if she set aside her mysticism and learned wisdom from Voltaire". That was the start of an exploration of European culture--for the incentive to read Cervantes and Voltaire, in Roy's words, "until then mere names, the former not even known."[5]

The exploration of Marxism had begun in the New York Public Library, provoked by American Radicals and probably guided by his wife Evelyn. The greater and more valuable exploration was of European culture, and it was followed through Bibliotheca National—a dictionary of book titles with synopses of their contents, and in his turn Roy compiled one in the *Library of a Revolutionary*.

One thing which struck Roy in Mexico was the level of general education of Europeans—of German hardware and coffee merchants being able to converse intelligently with academicians. The hardware merchant's wife introduced him to painting and the concept of art. Then Pablo Cazals and his wife and a Polish pianist led him to music. Roy gradually became acquainted with the wide interests and information of the Europen middle class. Military power or wealth did not play any important role. The terrorist

was dying, the Brahmin in him which had sworn by the greatness of his own culture was getting emaciated.

Though Roy never admitted it, it seems Greenwich Village in exile had more influence on him than either Moscow or Berlin. He was introduced to a creative bohemia—another aspect of European culture. With the Slackers—as the expatriate American radicals were called—he was participating in a living culture; not the bookish culture he had known in Calcutta nor the culture of religious rituals.

The realm of European culture extended from Mexico to Moscow and in the succeeding fifteen years whatever his political preoccupation he came frequently across it. The unity of the culture was surprising. Nationalism did not erect boundaries. There were some who counted French culture as their heritage; others had adopted French culture in preference to their own Spanish. Germans, Mexicans, Spaniards, Americans, English, French and Russians were mutually intelligible to each other in cultural matters—the creators were known and so were the trends and main outlines. The narrow Brahmin exclusiveness, the rejection of another culture as alien in spite of proximity, and ascriptive commitment were absent. This certainly was one of the great achievements of the Russian revolution in its early years, and the International fervour that had influenced the intellectuals in the twenties and the thirties were lost after the second world war with resurgence of nationalism.

Roy had outgrown cultural nationalism in Mexico, and since the basis of his nationalism was cultural he

outgrew nationalism itself. Marxism might have helped by providing an ideological basis, but the breadth of European culture made Marxism look a narrow doctrine, which attitude persisted with him throughout though he was prone to think of Marxism as a method of understanding European history and civilization.

The meeting and prolonged discussions with Borodin in Mexico gave him an understanding of European culture from the Marxist viewpoint, and he tended to attach the greatest importance to the Renaissance till August Thalheimer[6] introduced him to pre-Renaissance Scholasticism in which elements of humanism were present.

The theory of history which Roy adopted was European—beginning in Greece and Rome, eclipsed under medieval Christianity, resurgence during the Renaissance and continuous growth thereafter. As an individual he opted for European culture;—in nineteenth century Bengal, the basis for such adoption was provided by Derozio and Macaulay though the large number of his countrymen were unenthusiastic about adoption of European culture. The position was made easy for Roy on his discovery that French "was almost the mother tongue of all Mexican intellectuals". Bengali intellectuals used English in the same manner but were apologetic about it.

Roy went to Europe from Mexico more consciously prepared to respond to it, whereas he had come to America still living in a different spiritual world and on his own admission had not been able to benefit by the new environment. He went to Europe eagerly looking out for the privilege of

witnessing a renascent Germany—the home of philosophy, poetry, music, science, purged of the scourge of Prussian militarism. He was not disappointed. Modern socialism having attained theoretical maturity in Germany he enjoyed the company of Eduard Bernstein, Kautsky, Hilferding, Eduard Fuchs; August Thalheimer and Ernst Meyer, and was struck by their humaneness and good humored mutual tolerance.

Roy's approch to Marxism was neither political nor economic; it was philosophical. In Mexico he and his friends had built up, to quote Roy, a "small cosmopolitan community of free human beings", but Roy rejected arrogant proletarianism as well as adoption of bourgeois manners and attitudes. He had come to the conclusion that "intellectual aristocracy being a common human heritage, it alone could lay down the foundation of a really new social order"[7]. He also believed that the 18th century was an age of intellectual aristocracy, and that in that century the characteristically European culture reached its high water mark. Roy was in agreement with Antonio Gramsci that the philosophical aspect of Marxism needed to be revised so that it could offer something to the idealistically inclined. But this I suppose happened later.

The next event which determined the development of Roy's ideas occurred at Tashknet (1920-21). He had to deal with many Muslims and so he worked out the Muslim relationship with the global culture which was European. The Muslims had taken over Greek learning, preserved it during the medieval ages, and then passed it on to Europe and unintentionally prepared the ground for the Renaissance. This is an

over simplified statement but it did link Muslims with European culture. This study of Roy later appeared as *The Historical Role of Islam.*

The need for linking Indian culture with the European remained. In Mexico, Roy had attempted a Marxist interpretation of Indian history which was published under the title, *India's Past, Present and Future.* It did not go far beyond rejecting Aryanism, pointing out that Indian culture was derived from pre-Aryan elements and arguing that the social structure and cultural pattern of ancient India could not be essentially different from contemporary civilizations elsewhere. The idea of parallel development of Europe and India continued to haunt Roy, but the rest of his efforts belong to a later period, after his return to India. The emphasis was on discovering an ancient humanist and naturalist thought contemporary with Greece's and comparable to it, which was submerged under medieval theological and idealistic thought. His book, *Materialism,* which he called "an outline of the history of scientific thought" was a preliminary study on that line.

Roy's approach to European culture was different from Nehru's, the only other Indian leader of pre-independence India with an International outlook. Nehru had subscribed to the idea of a global development of history but when it came to India he adhered to the view that India's backwardness was due to foreign subjugation and not that foreign subjugation was the result of backwardness. As far as manufacture, trade and balance of payments were concerned, India and Europe were at par early in the 18th century, but not culturally. Nehru thought

the difference between India and Europe was because of the Industrial revolution, and an industrialized India could equal Europe. He never paid thought to the fact that the industrial revolution was not the anecdotal accident of Watt watching the steam raise the lid off the Kettle, but the result of sustained intellectural activity and craftmanship since the Renaissance. Roy put more value on the Renaissance and the Enlightenment than on the Industrial Revolution. There he also recognised the limitations of economic determinism.

No other Indian have tried so seriously to relate Indian civilization with the European. Roy thought of European culture as the culture of humanity—a global culture which had drawn its sources from diverse cultures of antiquity and made tributory those local cultures it came in contact with in its maturity.

Notes and References

1. M. N. Roy belonged to a priestly Brahmin family. His father was the last of the hereditary head priest and Trustee to the temple of the Goddess, Ksheputeswari, in Midnapur district in South-West Bengal. The temple had large land holdings which the head priest enjoyed. Roy's father, Dinabandhu, left his ancestral village and vocation and took up the the job of Sanskrit teacher in a village school near Calcutta.
See also M. N. Roy's article, "Disintegration of a Priestly Family" in *The Radical Humanist*, Feb 4, 1954.

2. The novel *Ananda Math,* written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee based on the revolt of the Hindu sanyasis against

the rulers in the famine of 1772-74 and the secret societies which the sanyasis organized provided the ideological-organizational basis of the militant revolutionaries of Bengal.

3. See: Samaren Roy, *The Roots of Bengali Culture;* Chapter on "Eighteen Fifty Seven"; Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1981.
Even Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar allowed the British garrison to be stationed inside the Sanskrit College to quell the rebellion.

4. Bipin Chandra Pal—*My Life and My Times.*

5. M. N. Roy—*Memoirs;* Allied, 1965, p. 86

6. The German Communist leader who was a close associate of Rosa Luxemburg wielded great influence on Roy and the two became great friends since 1920 when Roy arrived in Berlin on his way to Moscow. Thalheimer was also an authority on Sanskrit grammarian, Panini, which was probably another reason for their friendship, which lasted even after Roy returned to India to be jailed for 6 years. In his "Letters from Jail", Roy regularly wrote to his wife, Ellen Gottschalk, to seek guidance from Thalheimer about the researches he was doing while in jail.

7. M. N. Roy—*Memoirs*, p. 165

M. N. ROY AND MAHATMA GANDHI

"In April 1915, an Indian, who had just returned after many years abroad, made a speech in Madras to help the British recruit soldiers for the war against Germany. That same month another Indian left India to rendezvous with a ship bearing German arms that he planned to smuggle into India for a revolution against the British. Both men passionately desired self-government for their country, yet one was prepared to defend India's rulers against their enemy, and the other was conspiring with that enemy to bring about Britain's defeat.

"Twentyseven years later, the roles were reversed. He who had recruited soldiers now launched a movement that plunged the subcontinent into violence and chaos, and he who had conspired with Britain's enemy in 1915 now wrote pamphlets in support of the Allied war effort. These two men were Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) and Manabendra Nath Roy (1887-1954)."

This quotation from Professors Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller's *Communism in India* (University of California Press, 1959) admirably sums up the political positions of two Indians who have undoubtedly made important contributions to political thought in the present century but held diametrically opposite views about politics and society.

Gandhi, hailing from an affluent family—his father was prime minister to a number of native rulers—was sent to England because his father and

the rulers for whom he worked thought that "only a son with a higher education obtained in England would be able to defend the rulers and their prime minister against British agents." Roy, son of a poor village school teacher, went abroad on a purely revolutionary mission. "Gandhi took a vow before a Jain monk "to abstain from meat, women and wine" during his stay abroad which caused him serious psychological problems. Roy did not have any injunctions and during his sixteen years abroad learned and imbibed scientific attitude and western modes of life and society.

Gandhi, on his return from South Africa, "settled in his Ashram across the river for the very reason that he felt he should approach his vast homeland from the region and with the language of his origin." Roy returned from Europe with a Marxist zeal, not to be shaken by six years of rigorous imprisonment, and on his release took up residence at the foot of the Himalayas away from his native birth place.

Gandhi used religion and tradition to arouse the masses and succeeded in building up a mass upheaval for political gains. Roy abhorred religion and tradition and tried to build up a new leadership in India steeped in modern values so that independence meant and led to the establishment of a society based on the scientific and philosophical achievements of the West.

In Gandhi's Ashram one was barred from indulging in reading, which caused an old inmate Radharaman Mitra to leave the place to become an intellectual leader among Indian communists. (Philip Spratt, the number one accused in the Meerut Conspiracy case, thought of Mitra as the most intellectual

among the communists Spratt met in India in the twenties.) Roy, an idealist, on his release from jail prescribed a "Library of a Revolutionary" for his followers to study.

Gandhi was a realist, his realism stemming from "the more respectable traits attributed to his (bania) caste, enterprise, caution, realism, compromise and shrewdness." And Gandhi was a success, while Roy was not. But "Gandhi," according to Erik Erikson, author of Pulitzer prize winning *Gandhi's Truth,* "could not have fulfilled his role of a saintly politician (or, in his own words, 'a politician who tried to be a saint') had he not had the financial support of wealthy men." Yet, the congress Party, he led, accepted the Mountbatten plan for partition and rejected his advice to transform the Congress into "a social agency" when political power came within the reach of those very men who had financed him and the party.

In 1920 while discussing with Lenin the latter's thesis on the Colonial Question, Roy described Gandhi "as a religious and cultural revivalist" and asserted that as such "he was bound to be reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically." In support of his view, Roy had cited Plekhanov's similar judgement of Russian Populist and Social Revolutionary movements which believed in the special genius of the Slavic race, and denounced "capitalism as a western vice," championing a return to the village.

On January 1, 1925, Gandhi published an article on "Bolshevism" by Roy in *Young India,* which Roy wrote as a rejoinder to Gandhi's critical article. "Bol-

shevism and Discipline" published in that journal on August 24, 1924. Gandhi however made a significant comment in the introductory paragraph, "I can no more tolerate the yoke of Bolshevism as described by Mr Roy than of capitalism."

After his release from jail in India, on November 20, 1936, Roy wrote to several people including Gandhi for financial contribution for a journal he wanted to publish. Gandhi replied to his long time critic in a postcard that he (Roy) "should render only mute service to the cause of freedom". The very first issue of *Independent India* (April 4, 1937) that Roy published carried an article captioned, "Science and superstition" strongly critical of all that Gandhi espoused. The article provoked Gandhi to remark that Roy was his "enemy number one". And Roy was never able to establish his bona fides in Indian politics. Gandhi stood in the way and Roy was muted. Yet unlike many other "great" patriots Roy never succumed to Gandhi.

Gandhi used to make it clear that there would be no room for dissenters in any political organisation he commanded. Jawaharlal Nehru had recorded in his *Toward Freedom : The Autobiography* (1941 ; p. 43) that Gandhi told a meeting of the Muslims early in 1920, "so long as you choose to keep me as your leader you must accept my conditions, you must accept dictatorship and the discipline of martial law." Roy, on the contrary, believed in the right of dissent within a political organisation although once a decision is taken it has to be implemented until it was reversed.

In Roy's analysis, Gandhi was merely "the embo-

diment of the primitive, blind, spontaneous; spirit of revolt of the Indian masses." In the Indian context appeals to traditional values could only be religious, Roy held, and hence, "a nationalism based on such appeals would ultimately prove divisive and estrange the large Muslim minority." In Tashkent (1920-21) Roy had to deal with many Muslims and so he worked out the Muslim relationship with the global culture which, to Roy, was European. In Roy's view, Muslims had taken over Greek learning, preserved it during medieval ages, and then passed it on to Europe, where it served as the ground for the renaissance. This conception linking the Muslims with European culture later formed the basis of his book, *The Historical Role of Islam.*

M. N. Roy outgrew cultural nationalism while in Mexico, and since the basis of his nationalism was cultural, he had outgrown nationalism itself. This attitude persisted with Roy throughout the rest of his life and he remained a cosmopolitan. He also developed his firm belief in scientific materialism and a deep suspicion of the religious outlook of life, which played such a dominant role throughout the history of Indian culture and formed the basis of Gandhi's politics. "It was precisely what others considered 'changeless' in India that he (Roy) wanted to change." commented Prof. Stephen Hay.

Roy's approach to European culture was different from those of Gandhi, or even Nehru. Gandhi reacted to industrialisation in the same manner as Ruskin, William Morris, Thoreau and Tolstoy but without the aestheticism of any of them. Aestheticism however is an integral part of European culture.

In his appreciation of European culture, Roy thought of it as the culture of humanity—a global culture which has drawn its sources from diverse cultures of antiquity and made tributory those local cultures with which it came in contact in its maturity.

Nehru subscribed to the ideal of a global development of history, but when it came to India, he adhered to the views of Dadabhoy Naoroji and R. C. Dutt that India's backwardness was due to foreign subjugation and not that foreign subjugation was the result of backwardness. Nehru thought the difference between India and Europe had been created by the Industrial Revolution, and that an industrialised India could equal Europe. He did not think that the Industrial Revolution was not the anecdotal accident of Watt watching steam raise the lid off a kettle, but the result of sustained intellectual activity and craftmanship since the renaissance. Roy put more value on the renaissance and the enlightenment than on the industrial revolution. Later in his life, he thought that "intellectual aristocracy being a common human heritage, it alone could lay the foundation of a really new social order."

Gandhi died as a "martyr" and was called "the father of the nation" even though the party he built up rejected his last two advices. Roy died in poverty, forgotten and forsaken, but refused to be muted.

GANDHI AND INDIA'S FREEDOM MOVEMENT

After his return to India in January 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was extremely circumspect—in his political activities. He maintained a safe distance between himself and the Home Rule Leagures especially Bal Gangadhar Tilak, least he should offend the British authorities in India.

He met Tilak during a visit to India in 1896, but in the four years between his return (1915) and December 1919 he met Tilak only at Congress sessions. He was a notable absentee from the July 23, 1916 celebration of Tilak's 60th birthday when a lakh of rupees was presented to the ageing leader which Gandhi however used later. He preferred Bhupendranath Basu to Tilak because Basu made a loyalist speech in 1915 jarring to nationalist ears.

Gokhale was his mentor till his death in February 1915. Malaviya succeeded Gokhale as Gandhi's mentor. With the Surat extremists—Tilak, Bipin Pal and Lajpat Rai—Gandhi's relationship was never close. At Amritsar Congress, Tilak had declared that any proposal in regard to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms acceptable to C. R. Das would be acceptable to him too.

Tilak died in 1920, Bipin Pal left the Congress about that time; C. R. Das died in 1925 and Lajpat Rai in 1928. Around 1920 the time was ripe for a new leadership, different from both the Surat Extre-

mists and the Moderates. Gandhi supplied that leadership by avoiding a radical stand.

Year after year since the 1921 Ahmedabad Congress, Gandhi had refused to accept resolutions demanding complete independence, each time tabled at the instigation of M. N. Roy from abroad. He accepted the Independence resolution only in 1929 when the British Government had already promised Dominion Status. That resolution was a result of confabulations between Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and Srinivasa Iyenger.

Between 1920 and 1947, Gandhi and M. N. Roy represented two diametrically opposite viewpoints. The former was successful, but his success proved that Roy's appreciation of the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries, first expressed in 1920, was largely correct.

Gandhi wanted political change with minimum and marginal social change. Feudal tenures and capitalism were not to be challenged, but only made more humane. Till 1930, if not 1932, he treated untouchability and the caste system as unrelated; while untouchability was undesirable the caste system was worth retaining. It was an Arya Samajist approach though Gandhi maintained that he was a sanatanist.

M. N. Roy's contention was that mere independence would be hardly satisfying without radical social changes. The desire for national independence should be so channelled as to effect change in the structure of Indian society.

Other leaders found their place between these two limits of the political spectrum. Some gave priority to independence and made concessions to

social justice only to effect mass mobilization. Those who gave primacy to social justice were numerically too few to be effective.

Gandhi's circumspection till 1920 has to be seen as a bid for capturing leadership. And in this he did receive the blessings of the Indian bourgeoisie as well as the British Government. Edward Gait saw to it that he triumphed at Champaran against British interests which were insignificant and at cross purposes with more powerful British interests. Sydenham saw to it that a nominal rent remission could be interpreted as success for the *Kheda satyagraha* after the movement had virtually failed.

The man who coined the word *Harijan* did not attend the March 1918 Bombay conference on eradication of untouchability. It might be that he was afraid of being overshadowed by Tilak, who attended that conference. A little later, on May 5, at the Bijapur Prantik Conference Gandhi refused to sponsor a resolution which said : "The untouchables support the Lucknow Pact", authored by Tilak and Jinnah.

Gandhi's climb to leadership was made easier by the death of three stalwarts—Phirozeshah Mehta, Gokhale and Tilak. The involvement of former revolutionaries as a result of Royal clemency following armistice had humbled Surendranath Banerjee, made Bipin Pal redundant and Lajpat Rai became too involved with affairs in the Punjab to retain his All-India leadership.

Under the system of separate electorates Jinnah could not be a serious threat the leadership of Gandhi who emphasized being a Hindu who had resisted seduction by Christian proselytizers. The Khilafat

movement came in handy to further isolate Jinnah. That was the reason for Jinnah's opposition to separate electorates, till the time that he hoped and expected to be Gokhale's successor. But that hope and expectation was destroyed when Gokhale took Gandhi under his wings largely because of happenings in South Africa though Gokhale had laughed out of serious discussion ideas that Gandhi outlined in his *Hind Swaraj* in 1909. The majority of the members of the Servants of India Society were sceptic of admitting Gandhi to their membership, and ultimately Gandhi had to withdraw his application.

C. R. Das remained a serious rival, but he too died in 1925, and before his death he was seized by the bugbear of renunciation. In his autobiography Gandhi concedes that there were only two popular leaders, Tilak and Das.

Tilak, however, was not handicapped by being a leader in a Muslim majority province as Das was. The Bengal Pact was Das's way out as the Lucknow Pact was Tilak's. But Das's attempt at the 1923 Cocanada Congress to make the Bengal Pact a basis for an India Pact failed to carry a majority, largely because of opposition from Gandhians.

Efforts to dislodge Das and his followers from leadership in Bengal that followed their arrest in the non-cooperation movement would not bear recapitulation because the Mahatma's actions were not too saintly. Later he wanted Swarajya Party members denied all executive positions in the Congress. Motilal Nehru protested angrily, and led a walk-out; which enabled the resolution to be passed by a slender majo-

rity, but so strong had been the protest that the resolution was never implemented.

Motilal Nehru, however, was overcome by his weakness for his son, and the son became a *chela* of the Mahatma. The last angry encounter between Motilal and Gandhi was on June 27, 1924 at Ahmedabad when Gandhi sought ouster of Swarajists from the Congress Executive.

During 1928 Motilal was busy drafting an agreed Constitution for Dominion Status. The main problem was on allotment of seats in the Central Legislature to the Muslims. The Lucknow Pact was the first and the last agreement. C. R. Das had failed to win support for his Bengal Pact being converted into an All India Pact. The Nehru Report had to be cautious if it was to find acceptance from the Hindus. In fact in 1923 C. R. Das had resigned from the Presidentship of the Congress because of Hindu (mainly Gandhian) criticism of the Bengal Pact.

Gandhi showed the least interest in the efforts of Motilal Nehru and the All Parties Conference to produce an agreed Constitution. His leadership had been built on two facts : (1) assuring the British leaders, Willingdon, Sydenham, Chelmsford and even officers at the Commission level of the company he kept—"no seditionists like Tilak", and (2) agitations for redressal of minor grievances like unfair practices of planters in Champaran, and delay in government ordering the usual rent remission during crop failure in Kheda.

In his autobiography Gandhi reaffirmed his loyalty to the British Constitution. Even the 1921-22 non-cooperation was launched for redressal of grievances in Punjab and of Moslems about the Khilafat.

During that movement which never questioned British right to rule India he was given or assumed the title of "Dictator"—a term which remained current till 1933. Another term borrowed from Fascist vocabulary—"High Command"—had a longer currency.

The All Parties Conference foundered on the issue of communal representation which because of haggling since 1923 became increasingly intractable, and ultimately in 1931 the representatives of minorities at the Second Round Table Conference struck a Minorities Pact, and Ramsay MacDonald announced the Communal Award in 1932.

Gandhi wrote the autobiography to assure people that he was a Hindu who did not wear the sacred thread because it was not usual for his caste to do so but he did keep the pigtail. So in 1932 Gandhi went on a fast to prevent a political break up of Hindu society.

M. N. Roy's entirely secular leadership and Nehru's and Bose's less flagrant secularity got a chance only after 1936. Nehru was the Congress President in 1936 and 1937; Bose was President in 1938 and re-called in 1939 but was forced to resign by Gandhians.

Secularism did not get a chance largely because of the Congress Socialists who flourished under Nehru's patronage but were sentimentally attached to Gandhi. Bose was ousted from Congress Presidentship because of their help to the Gandhians.

Objectively Gandhi felt that the British had forfeited the right to rule India only in 1942 when the Japanese and the Germans seemed to be winning the war.

TWO SOCIO-POLITICAL TRADITIONS

In modern Bengal, that is after 1793 A. D. when Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement, two opposing trends appeared—one for modernization and the other for a return to the old pattern of life.

Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement created a new landed aristocracy. This landed aristocracy of Bengal was anxious to rehabilitate itself in the old feudal pattern by ritual confirmism, and by subordination to the ruling authority. Even their rights as rentiers were never claimed till 1840 when the Landholders' Society was formed in a move to limit bureaucratic excesses.

Yet, the new aristocracy was liberal and due to its munificence many of the institutions Bengal is proud of came into being. Most importantly this new aristocracy supported the liberal professions—of lawyers, physicians and teachers—which became the backbone of the rising political middle class of Bengal.

English education, introduced in 1836 on a scale to mop up the progeny of the elite in all district towns, was able to produce from 1844 onwards successive generation of Bengalis, to whom Hindu birth and English education did not seem irreconcilable. These young men began trickling into the Indian Civil Service from 1861 onwards on merit judged at a competitive examination for Englishmen at which they appeared and distinguished themselves. After 1871 when Oxbridge opened its doors to non-Anglicans they went there. Others went to the Inns of Court to become barristers.

By 1880s, when M. N. Roy (originally named Narendra Nath Bhattacharya) was born, a small Westernized elite had come into being. This elite was larger in Bengal than in the rest of the country. What was more important was that since 1878, and more particularly since the Ilbert Bill of 1883, this Westernized elite claimed equality of status with the British, whether members of the ruling bureaucrary or of the trading and planting community.

Opposition to the Ilbert Bill, drafted by an Indian member of the ICS (Biharilal Gupta), which gave powers to Indian judges to try Europeans was vehemently resented by the planters, most of whom, in their treatment of servants and labourers, often overstepped the limits of what was permissible under law. The bill was dropped but it left a trail of racial bitterness which was never erased. The following year local self-governments were statutorily established which further exacerbated the European minority. In 1892 Indian representation in the legislatures was increased which further incensed the Europeans.

By 1890s the political struggle between the entrenched Europeans and the Indian elite had reached a level of acerbity which would have been unimaginable during the time when Governors-General like Bentinck lent their ears to enlightened Indians. The Westernized elite had to battle not only with the European vested interests but also with Indian orthodoxy. The latter were jealous of Westernized elite, whom they treated as *noveau riches*. Since caste restrictions are based on food and dress, the Westernized elite's life styles had come under fire since the time of Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore.

However the situation was saved by mediators. The first one was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) who inspite of his radicalism (advocacy of widow remarriage and inclusion of Western philosophy in syllabus of the Sanskrit College) escaped bitter attack because he never forsook the Pandit's dress. His agnosticism was ignored; his abjuration of European clothes were remembered.

British liberals (Macaulay, Ripon and Hume) had provided the rudiments of a political apparatus : Universities, Local Self-government, Legislatures and the Indian National Congress. The tradition for working such organizations was lacking, while between 1899 and 1904 Europeans resident in India, both official and non-official, pressured government to interfere in Calcutta University and Calcutta Municipal Corporation, and for splitting the biggest legislature with the largest Indian representation into two separate legislatures. The last mentioned resulted in the first partition of Bengal. All these regressive measures were resented and led to agitation and years of terrorism.

It might be useful to point out the difference in social consciousness between Bengal and other parts of India. The first Bengali to return from a trip overseas was Dwarkanath Tagore, but in 1843 he was neither expected to nor did perform purification rites. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi from Gujerat and Jaya Prakash Narayan did perform these rites in 1890 and 1929 respectively.

From 1870 onwards a climate of opinion obtained in Bengal which was forward looking, reverential but not idolatrous of the past and tradition, and intel-

lectually equipped enough to grasp and assimilate new ideas without displaying emotional laceration. That is how several Bengalis in different fields of activity attained international eminence and most of them were born between 1860 and 1900. Rabindranath Tagore in literature and art; Jagadish Chandra Bose in biology; M. N. Roy in political thought, Satyendranath Bose in Physics and Meghnad Saha in Astrophysics. All these luminaries were the products of a colonial culture, though two of them, Tagore and Roy, did not receive a formal colonial education.

After his expulsion from the Comintern, M. N. Roy could have stayed on in Germany because an earlier co-conspirator. Franz von Papen, so friendly in Mexico, was the Chancellor preparing to hand over the country to the Nazis. In fact, Roy had once met Hitler through him at a beer pub, as he told me, and was repelled even by his manners. Other Indians (like Tagore, Gandhi and Subhas Bose) had shaken hands with Mussolini and Hitler, with only Tagore frieving over the amicability. Roy came to love Germany prior to the rise of the Nazis. He admired the French Enlightenment and though he thought Italy was the mother of it all during the Renaissance he used it in Mussolini's time for just a train journey homewards.

But back home he found that there was a great admiration for both Hitler and Mussolini—the former because he 'Aryan' and a proponent of the cult of Aryanism, and the latter because he had given an Empire to a country generally believed to be lazy and unenterprising. Most Hindus think of themselves as Aryans and of the northern part of the country as 'Aryavarta', especially Brahmins but Roy, though

born a Brahmin, did not subscribe to Aryanism.

Aryanism however has a long history. Sir William Jones in 1793 had established sisterhood between Sanskrit and its derivates with the European languages such as Greek, Latin and even German and English. Around 1861 the jurist Henry Maine had argued that Indians were capable of representing government because as Aryans they shared a common heritage with the British of managing affairs through elected representatives. (M. E. Grant, *Life of Sir Henry Maine*, p. 370).

Apart from Aryanism, most Indians in 1936-37 believed that derived his greatness from 'brahmacharya' or celibacy. Gandhi, who had taken the vow of celibacy in 1906, though living with his wife, was the most powerful advocate of 'brahmacharya', and Roy's first controversy with Gandhi was over this issue. Jaya Prakash Narayan, though professedly a Marxist, was married to a woman brought up in Gandhi's Ashram who had extracted a vow that Narayan would not claim a husband's right over her body. Narayan, as one of his closest friends, Minoo Masani described him, was a "Hindu Marxist".

While during the first world war, a large number of Indians were pro-German on the principle that "my enemy's enemy is my friend", in the years preceding the second world war there were claims of racial and ideological affinity for Hitler and the Nazis. Even much of the terminology in the Indian National Congress was fascist—the leader was the 'dictator' assisted by a 'High Command' unfortunately this term has survived fascist misfortunes and is still in use. Subhas Chandra Bose had identified modernism in Europe

with fascism and communism and sought a synthesis of the two (as late as 1941) to be implanted in India. Nehru had recorded in his *Toward Freedom : The Autobiography* (1941, p. 43) that Gandhi told a meeting of the Muslims early in 1920, "so long as you choose to keep me as your leader you must accept my conditions, you must accept dictatorship and the discipline of martial law".

In this bizarre world Roy found the bottom knocked out of all the terms he had been accustomed to in his years abroad. At the 1939 Tripuri Congress, Govind Ballav Pant's plea was that Subhas Bose, elected President for a second term, should relinquish all authority to Gandhi because both Germany and Italy had made progress only because they had been led by uncontested leaders like Hitler and Mussolini.

The admiration for Hitler and Mussolini outlived their disasters in the second world war, and as late as 1977 Gandhian leaders (like Charan Singh) attacked Indira, daughter of Nehru, for having failed to do well by the country as the European dictators had.

Most of the time Roy was at a disadvantage in matters of communication. Between his release from jail in November 1936 and his break with the Congress in 1940 but for the lone exception of Nehru all the others attached different meanings from his to the political vocabulary. And Nehru often tampered lexicon to avoid offending Gandhi.

For a short while when Rammohun Roy was active (1814-33) Voltaire had been more than a mere name to the Indian elite, but that was only in Bengal. The rest of the country had hardly heard of Voltaire or Tom Paine. Neither of them had been Chengiz

Khan or Tamerlane. Hitler and Mussolini as the modern counterparts of the Mongol marauders were more intelligible, at least more substantive than an Einstein or a Freud fleeing the Nazi storm troopers.

Gandhi, to whom the elite including Nehru, had surrendered their reason, once wrote to Nirmal Kumar Bose, that he had heard the name of Freud only from another professor—a mere academic exercise. And about Einstein there is no Gandhian comment available, but about his forerunner Newton, Gandhi wrote in his *Non-Violence in Peace and War* that the vedic rishis were greater intellectuals than the Englishman.

The major difference between Gandhi and Roy was however that Gandhi was a practical politician, a realist. His life style and moves were aimed at achieving success and that under his leadership. This practicality of Gandhi stemmed from the "traits attributed to his caste (bania)—enterprise, realism, compromise and shrewdness", according to Erik H. Erikson, author of the Pulitzer prize winning book, *Gandhi's Truth*. But, as Erikson commented "Gandhi could not have fulfilled the role of a saintly politician (or, in his own words 'a politician who tried to be a saint') had he not had the financial support of wealthy men".

Roy, on the other hand, was an idealist, and although he claimed to be a practical idealist, it is doubtful if he was that. He retained, according to one of close American academic friends Dr. Richard L. Park, the spirit of the Bengali Brahmins—the spirit of uncompromising adherence to principles and non-attachment to personal power. On 15th August

1947 Gandhi was still active to combat his own nemesis—the rise of Muslim separatism in India. Roy thought Gandhi's "nationalism, heavily tainted by Hindu orthodoxy, (had) bred Muslim communalism". Roy on that day issued his 22-point Principles of Radical Democracy, later called "New Humanism" and retired to the secluded life of intellectual activity.

Two Indian politicians made serious attempts to understand British imperialism : Gopal Krishna Gokhale as a lawyer and legislator examined the British constitutional system and came to the conclusion that the logic of rule by consent would lead, as it had done in Canada, to self-government. So in 1908 he outlined the objective of the Indian National Congress as attainment of a form of government "similar to what exists in self-governing colonies" on equal terms with them.

The other, M. N. Roy, examined the working of economic factor and in 1927 came to the same conclusion as Gokhale's that Britain would eventually confer Dominion Status on India.

Others were too involved with emotional issues to closely examine factors at work. The introduction of the elective system in 1909 in India, which had not known that system ever at any level—even panchayats were assembled mutually by the village influentials and arrived at a consensus without voting—escaped their notice.

Between representative and responsible government there could not be many intermediate stages if the public mind continued to expand and outgrow each stage. This expansion depended upon education, facilities for which were rapidly augmented between 1920 and 1935 when elected ministers were entrusted the responsibility for it. Even with a high property and literacy qualification for franchise the total voting strength in the provinces taken together exceeded

30 million in 1935. Though only a small fraction of the total Indian population, the size of this electorate was comparable to the total population of several self-governing countries.

Yet it was largely a privileged and propertied electorate which the British bourgeoisie could come to terms with. Roy's task after his release from prison in India in 1936 was to prevent such a bargain and he strove hard to halt such a development which he had fared in 1920 and foreseen more clearly seven years later.

Unfortunately the leadership of the Indian National Congress, the only influential political organization, was vested in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who thought the owning classes were trustees of the interests of the working classes and as such there was no clash between their respective interests which could not be amicably resolved through reaching a consensus. This corresponded to the traditional Indian view and few saw its divergence from the parliamentary system which rested on the prevalence of the majority opinion.

A disconcerting fact was that Muslims being less than a quarter of the total population identified majority rule with Hindu rule, and would not commit their future to enlightened and liberal opinion. In fact the weight of liberal opinion had declined through two successive events—the formation of the Home Rule Leagues in 1917 and the prospects of a modified representative government under the 1919 reforms.

Some senior Congressmen withdrew in 1917 and many more in 1919 to form the Indian Liberal Asso-

ciation, committed to working the reforms. Then came the Muslim apprehensions about the future of the Caliphate and sacred sites at Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Kemal Ataturk, and not British, abolished the Caliphate and Turkish nationalism severed its pan-Islamic commitments relinquishing Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Arabia to the Victorious Allies. The British went as far as they could by installing Hashemite (tracing relationship with Mohammed) princes at Mecca and Jerusalem. Meanwhile the more conservative section of Indian Muslims had worked themselves into a frenzy and accepted Gandhi's leadership for the next few years.

It would be worthwhile to briefly review the growth of Gandhi's leadership. He had struggled with reasonable success to secure for Indians in South Africa better rights than what they had enjoyed till then. In this he had received the backing of the British bureaucracy in India which, though contemptuous of natives was unfailingly zealous of the rights of British Indian subjects abroad and in the Indian principalities.

Even Kipling, the ideologue of the British Indian bureaucracy claimed for Indians in Africa the status of Whites. That was why Gokhale on his visit to South Africa was not only a state guest but was accorded all the honours due to diplomatie envoy. Further the Government of India thought of itself as having the same status as the Dominions. In fact Sir Valentine Chirol had in 1910 publicly advocated this status for the bureaucratic regime without however it being responsible to elected representatives.

One could multiply the illustrations of this British

Indian attitude. It led to India being represented at the Imperial War Conference and the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles, and being a founding member of the League of Nations, and the functionary in all these cases was not a Briton but an Indian—S. P. Sinha, later raised to the peerage. In 1917 the Government of India banned the emigration of indentured Indian labour to South Africa.

Clearly the government was seeking, after the deaths of Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale, the emergence of a leader who would attain the popularity of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who had served a term of six years on the charge of sedition. The most eligible person was Gandhi, who had declared himself a loyalist and on various occasions raised ambulance units to aid the British war effort and had kept himself away from the Home Rule League.

Thus Gandhi was favourably received by Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, the governor of Bombay and Sir Edward Gait, the governor of Bihar and Orissa. He was invited to the Viceroy's War Conference from which Tilak was excluded. Chelmsford, Willingdon and Gait carried out his suggestions and helped to make his early campaigns successful. Each of these were minor issues and accommodating Gandhi was not difficult. Less than 300 indigo planters were affected in Champaran and theirs in any case was a dying vocation. It might have been different if Gandhi had taken up the cause of tea labour. The Kheda satyagraha secured a rent revision which is usual in instances of crop failure.

At Kheda, Gandhi received the honorific of 'Mahatma' or the great soul. It boosted his image as

a holy man, which he reinforced by his autobiography published in Gujarati in 1925 and in English in 1929. The main theme of the autobiography was that during his stay abroad extending over 25 years he had refrained from partaking of meat and wine and had refused to be seduced by women and Christianity.

Indian nationalism till 1930 was overwhelmingly Hindu. Hinduism attaches special value to holiness; abstinence from meat qualifies one for being considered holy. Reverence for abstinence from sex is even greater. Gandhi had taken the vow of 'brahmacharya' in 1906. Jayprakash Narayan is believed to have been denied sex by his wife who had grown up in Gandhi's Ashram, but he did not publicise the fact and make capital out of it as Gandhi did. Subhas Chandra Bose is said to have abstained from sex till he met Emily Schenkl in 1933. Most Hindus admired Hitler for being a 'brahmachari' from birth and his early successes in the Second World War to having been so.

The fact that Gandhi had not built up a career as a lawyer was accepted as proof of his renunciation. Jayprakash in his later years also received considerable credit for it. Subhas Chandra Bose had resigned from the Indian Civil Service, then the highest career opportunity open for an Indian. This too was an act of renunciation. Jawaharlal Nehru had also not donned his barrister's robe after his return to a prosperous father's son which were equivalent to renunciation.

Roy felt lost in the company of renunciates but he did not have a sense of guilt.

Gandhi believed in trusteeship and class collaboration and in an equally tenacious way Roy thought

only of promoting class differentiation in the national movement and how could the bourgeoisie be prevented from grabbing power. Therefore he called for a leadership alternative to Gandhi's in the National Congress. Circumstances seemed favourable but huge cultural obstacles had to be overcome.

At the Lahore Congress (1929) Gandhi had agreed to accept the resolution for complete independence and had nominated Jawaharlal Nehru as the president. But Roy's advocacy of organizing the Congress as a Constituent Assembly had repeatedly fallen on deaf ears. Aggravating agrarian discontent had been drawn into political channels by Acharya Narendra Dev and Purushottamdas Tandon at least in U.P. under Jawaharlal's patronage.

Imminence of Dominion Status had become palpable to the bourgeoisie, till then consisting of mainly textile interests, who obtained through the Indian Tariff Board a duty of 20 p.c. on British cotton goods and benefited from a commercial treaty negotiated directly between India and Japan. The British Secretary of State for India had in 1929 described tariff autonomy as "Dominion Status in action; there is a Dominion attribute. It has now become part and parcel of the rights of India".

By 1934 the officer corps of eight units of the Army had been Indianised up to the rank of Company Commander. There were also Indian officers in the Air Force and the Navy. An Indian Military Academy had been established to accelerate Indianization of the officer corps. In another five years' time, the backbone of the bureaucracy, the ICS, was scheduled to have Indians constituting half the cadre. By

1944 half of the Indian Police Service was scheduled to be Indian.

All these pointed to attainment of Dominion Status within ten years if only the Congress accepted Provincial autonomy and a transitional phase at the Centre. Under pressure from the bourgeoisie the Congress was inclined to give provincial autonomy a trial.

The Socialists in the Congress panicked at the prospect of a return to reformism and Swarajist parliamentarianism. They were all "revolutionaries" and the majority called themselves Marxists. They hurriedly formed the Congress Socialist Party. At the May 1934 session, AICC had discussed a return to constitutional and parliamentary means.

Gandhians, as they had expressed themselves at the Gaya Congress in 1922, remained opposed to parliamentary means. Later the same year (1934) the CSP put forth a demand for Congress refusing to enter at any stage negotiations on the constitutional issue with the British government. Gandhi's experience of the second Round Table Conference (1931) had not been happy. He had not been able to reverse the decision of the earlier conference for a transitional "dyarchy" at the Centre to which the Liberals and Muslims stuck.

In the CSP demand for no negotiations and mobilisation for a Constituent Assembly (a Royist contribution) lay a way out for him. So, for the April 1936 Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress Jawaharlal Nehru was nominated President. He was allowed to include Subhas Bose (who was then abroad) and three Congress Socialists in his Working Committee. These three—Jayprakash Narayan,

Narendra Dev and Achyut Patwavardhan, were acceptable to Gandhi. Two years later Bose was nominated for Presidency at the Haripura session.

Rightists in the Congress carried out a rearguard action and Nehru resigned. However at Gandhi's intervention the resignation was withdrawn, and Nehru presided also at the subsequent Faizpur session, Sardar Patel being induced to withdraw from contest. At this session the Left wing had four members in the Congress Working Committee and commanded a third of the membership of the AICC.

At the Faizpur session, which he attended for the first time as an AICC delegate, Roy expressed his view that the 1935 Constitution could not be wrecked by entering the Councils or boycotting them but only by extra-parliamentary mass action and electioneering should be utilised for that.

Leftist unity in the Congress however was short-lived and collapsed in 1939, when Subhas Bose, re-elected for a second term, had to resign. Neither Nehru, nor Bose, nor the CSP, nor even the CPI accepted Roy's call for an alternative leadership. Nehru argued that Gandhian leadership was too firmly entrenched to be replaced and any joint action by the Left would turn the Congress more to the right.

As far as Gandhi was concerned, the Left—Nehru and Bose included—had served his immediate purpose to frighten the Right enough into obedience to him and eschewing trends towards parliamentarianism. They also served his purpose later during the Second World War. Repeated demands by the CSP and the Forward Bloc for Gandhi to lead another movement against the British invested Gandhi with an

importance which his earlier series of failures since 1920 did not entitle him to. But, immediately on the outbreak of the Second World War, Gandhi made a trip to Shimla to meet the Viceroy without even consulting the Congress President or the Working Committee and offered co-operation.

At the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 there was a feeling within the Congress that it was the opportune moment to wrest concessions from the British.

As long as the war was confined to Europe and North Africa, Gandhians talked about the ethics of association with violent activities. The Congress Socialists were demanding action—a mass struggle to overthrow British rule. The British were not under such strain as to be cowed down by threats of mass action. In any case, after more than a decade of low prices and acute unemployment among the educated, volunteer peasants were flocking to the recruiting centres and the educated offering themselves for commissions in the armed forces.

Individual satyagraha, which was sort of a pacifist protest or demonstration of conscientious objection, held the field. But once the Japanese entered the war on the side of the Axis Powers in December 1941 and overran the Far East and captured Rangoon on March 11, 1942, the tone changed. Gandhi no longer expected the British to win, and the ambulance volunteer of the Boer and Zulu wars and recruiting sergeant of the first Great war wrote to Sir Stafford Cripps who came to offer responsible government at the end of the war that he was giving a "post-dated cheque on a crashing bank".

The speed of the Japanese advance raised hopes among the Congress Socialists. Allied reverses in Europe and Africa had raised milder hopes, and succumbing to these Subhas Chandra Bose had escaped to Germany in January 1941. Till that time the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact had prevailed which gladdened Bose's heart who for long had dreamt of a synthesis of fascism and communism being the ideal solution for India.

By late 1942 the Japanese had overrun Burma. The 'Quit India' movement of August 1942, was well-timed to facilitate a quick Japanese advance towards India after the monsoon ended. The CSP and Forward Bloc were its main proponents, and both had massive following in Eastern U.P., Bihar, Bengal and Assam. The programme included disruption of railways which would have left the base at Imphal to which British troops had fallen back in sore strait. Quit India was the most violent of all the various movements so far launched. But it failed, even after Gandhi blessed it, because the Japanese had overstretched their lines.

Yet, in 1945 the British government decided to pave the way for transfer of power and held a public trial of three INA officers—a Hindu, a Sikh and a Muslim—at the Red Fort bypassing the Army code of holding such trials in private through court martial proceedings. The trial was intended to boost the morale of the Indian National Congress and of Indian nationalism.

And in 1947 Britain accorded Dominion Status to India as foreseen by Roy and transferred power to the Congress and the Muslim League on the basis of

the electoral results of 1946 by partitioning the country much to the dismay of both Roy and Gandhi for different reasons. Gandhi's objections were rejected by those very people who had given their unqualified support to him earlier and had raised his status as the "Father of the Nation". Roy was disappointed because at the end of his active political life the fear he had anticipated and fought against had become a reality.

Appendix—I

GANDHI-ROY

The following pages contain a letter by M. N. Roy to Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhiji's reply thereto and Roy's rejoinder. Roy was impelled to write this letter to Gandhiji by the latter's article under the caption "The Congressman" published subsequently in 'Harijan' dated 11th November 1939. In that acticle Gandhiji referred to various groups in the Congress and raised the following questions: 'Are they centripetal or centrifugal? Do they strengthen the organisation or do they weaken it? Are they not bidding for power? Do they not distrust one another? Do they submit to discipline?' He further invited Congressmen to express their differences to Rajendra Babu and 'tell him what they would like him to do and, if he cannot comply with their wishes, what they would themselves do.'

Roy took advantage of this invitation to clarify the position of the League of Radical Congressmen regarding the questions raised by Gandhiji—and to bring out clearly the fundamental issues that are at the bottom of the differences in the Congress. He addressed the letter to Gandhiji in order that those fundamental issues may be discussed widely by the rank and file of the Congress.

M. N. ROY'S LETTER TO MAHATMA GANDHI

My dear Gandhiji,

Aware of your anxiety to hear everybody and the readiness to reply to questions even from the lowliest quarters, I take the liberty of addressing these lines to you. I am encouraged to do so by your article entitled "The Congressman", in which you raise a series of pertinent questions about the attitude and significance of the different groups inside the Congress. As these questions are of public importance, I presume that you will have no objection to replying to my letter in the columns of the 'Harijan', where space may be found for this letter also.

Needless to say that I do not presume to speak in behalf of all the groups you have mentioned in your article. This letter is written only in behalf of the League of Radical Congressmen, which is referred to in your article as 'the Royists'. It will contain a statement of the views of this particular group, and I shall endeavour to satisfy your questions as far as this particular group is concerned.

I am not addressing this letter to the Congress President, as you have suggested, because I have been writing to him from time to time expressing my opinion about outstanding problems, and he on his side, has been very kind to acknowledge the receipt of my communications and answer them when he found it necessary to do so. I do not know if my letters to the Congress President, which were, of course, meant for the Working Committee, ever came to your notice. Being of the opinion that particularly in the present juncture, the policy of the Congress should have been, and could have been other than it is today, I was thinking of communicating my views to you, hoping that they might be favoured with your partial, if not full, approval. Your article gives me the opportunity of doing so.

From the very beginning, I was of the opinion that it would have been not only honorable and dignified, but politically useful, for the Congress to adopt the policy originally recommen-

ded by you. I mean, the policy which has been called "unconditional co-operation." Since then, you have clearly defined what that policy would exactly mean. It would be moral support for the professed war aims of England while there would be no active co-operation nor any active resistance. The attitude could be more correctly defined as that of benevolent neutrality. In my letter to the Congress President, written on October 19, I recommended neutrality on the part of the Congress, should the useless armed hostilities continue in Europe, disregarding an appeal for peace to be issued in behalf of the Congress and personally by yourself.

The present policy of the Congress practically amounts to neutrality, to some extent. But I am of the opinion that it was not necessary to have the Congress Ministries resign at this stage. I expresed that opinion in my letter to the Congress President. In the same letter, I explained how, remaining in office, Congressmen would not be necessarily obliged to co-operate willingly and actively in war-like preparations. I also pointed out how, on the contrary, the Congress Ministries could serve the very useful purpose of defending the maximum possible civil liberties against the operation of the Defence of India Act. By taking up the attitude of neutrality, in so far as armed hostilities or war-like preparations are concerned the Congress would not find itself in the present deadlock, and could go ahead with the work for securing the freedom of India under whatever protection the Congress Ministries could offer. Launching upon the alternative policy of getting involved in an interminable controversy with the British Government, which can never be expected to give a positive reply to the Congress demand for the recognition of India as an independent nation, the Working Committee is being driven in the direction of a struggle for which, you are so decidedly of the opinion, the country is not prepared. This is not only an anamolous, but a dangerous position. It could have been avoided, and it should have been avoided, if the Working Committee acted according to your original advice, even if they would not be influenced by the opinion of modest Congressmen like myself.

The above brief statement regarding the views of the particular group, in behalf of which I am speaking, should satisfy

your questions. This particular group obviously does not represent any centrifugal tendency. It is a group of loyal Congressmen who earnestly wish to strengthen the organisation to which they belong. When it criticises the policy of the present leadership, and suggests the necessity of an alternative leadership, thereby meaning a change of the policy, not necessarily the personnel, it should not be accused of "bidding for power". I am decidedly of the opinion that the Congress will be seriously weakened, it will be in the danger of disintegration and demoralisation, if its members are deprived of the right of such honest criticism and even of revolt against a leadership when they feel that the organisation is not being properly led according to its relevant principles.

You admit that "the formation of different groups in a mass organisation like the Congress is inevitable, and may be a distinct sign of progress and life". Yet, you are "afraid that these groups contain in themselves the seeds of the decay of the Congress". This obvious contradiction can be explained only by the assumption that you have satisfied yourself that all is not "well with the groups". I do not know what is your source of information, nor do I hold any brief for the other groups, although I do not see any reason to doubt their bona fides. However, speaking for one particular group, I have no difficulty in giving straightforward replies to your questions, and in reassuring you that you need not be afraid, in so far as this group is concerned. As regards our attitude towards discipline, we have publicly disagreed with the prevailing conception among certain Congressmen in high quarters, but while expressing our honest convictions freely, in practice we have always submitted ourselves to the discipline of the organisation to which we belong. Both the Congress President and the Secretary of the A. I. C. C. will bear testimony to this fact.

As regards your question, what this particular group would like the Working Committee to do, I need not give any answer because already I have written to the Congress President in extenso. As regards the latter part of the same question, what would we do ourselves if the Congress President cannot comply with our wishes, the answer of the parti-

cular group is, while retaining the democratic right of agitating to convert the majority to our views, we shall abide by the decision of the Congress. We have expressed our disapproval of oppositional groups inside the Congress acting in their own way, whenever the decision of the majority goes against them. We have disassociated ourselves with the proposition of some opposition groups to organise war-resistance irrespective of the decision of the Congress.

I believe, this much will relieve you of any anxiety that you may have about the intents and purposes of this particular group. Now I turn to the question which, in your opinion, is the crucial.

I must confess that I have been rather perplexed by your insistence on tracing the root of every evil to the "absence of a living faith in non-violence in thought, word and deed". With the highest respect for your idealism, and admiration for the ideal of non-violence itself, I cannot help the feeling that your insistence on absolute non-violence is not a practical proposition. An ideal cannot be realised before the pre-conditions thereof are created. I also have an ideal, perhaps it is more modest than that of non-violence. My ideal is the establishment of a social order in which human beings will be free from the present limitations to their progress in every department of life. In one word, that ideal is called Socialism. But it would be a foolishly impractical proposition for me to insist that from to-day everybody must be a Socialist in thought, word and deed. Much ground is to be covered before the ideal can be attained. In doing that, we may not be always strictly acting according to the ideal, but in so far as every step in that direction brings us nearer to our ideal, we remain faithful to it. However, you may not be convinced by these arguments of logical or theoretical nature. Having regard for your view about the relation between the end and the means, I shall not press the point any more.

As a practical politician, I cannot take up the same attitude towards non-violence as you do. The Congress being primarily a political organisation, all its policies and activities should be determined by political considerations. That is my firm opinion and I have never made any secret of it. I am also of the opinion

that this sceptical attitude towards a moral proposition which however noble it may be by itself, is obviously irrelevant to our political purpose, does not in any way disqualify me to be a member of the Congress. If alarming signs of the Congress weakening are to be detected on all sides, the danger is not to be found in the honestly critical attitude of tried fighters for freedom like myself, but in the spirit of intolerance and dogmatism spreading throughout the country on your authority. People having not the least in common with you, altogether incapable of even sharing your "living faith", known far and wide to be always acting to the contrary, go about as the self-appointed conscience keepers of all Congressmen, and have instituted throughout the Congress organisation a veritable system of moral inquisition. This pretence of morality on the part of the hypocrite is simply intolerable. As Congressmen, we are always ready to obey the instructions of all constitutionally competent authorities, although the sense of discipline cannot make us less jealous about our democratic right, which is to express our disagreement boldly and to endeavour to make the leaders take notice of the rank and file opinion, and to see that the Congress policy conforms to the will of the entire organisation and is determined according to the realities of the situation and necessities of the country.

Groups existing inside the Congress with this spirit can never do any harm to the organisation; on the contrary, as you yourself say, they "may be a distinct sign of progress and life." The basis of the unity of the Congress must be its political programme. So long as Congressmen are united with that purpose, their views on other questions should not be subjected to any uniform standard. If the political programme of the Congress is subordinated to other considerations, if the loyalty of Congressmen is to be judged not by their devotion to that ideal and the determination to fight for it, but by the profession of irrelevant faiths then, the Congress will be in the danger of disintegration. This dangerous tendency is asserting itself throughout the Congress organisation. Hence the weakness that you fear and detect.

As far as the members of this particular group are concerned they will never do anything to weaken the Congress,

although they reserve the right to disagree with, and oppose introduction of, doctrines and ideas having no bearing upon the political programme of the Congress. We regard the doctrine of non-violence as developed by you as such. Therefore, we have always criticised it, and we are definitely of the opinion that your insistence upon the impractical proposition of every Congressman having a "living faith in non-violence in thought, word and deed" does more harm than good to the Congress, because it puts a premium on consumate hypocricy. Congressmen are driven to hypocritical professions, not because they are morally depraved, but because you ask them to do the impossibility of transcending the limitations of their physical being. It is easier to pretend perfection than to have the courage to plead inability.

Finally, I must sound a note of warning. It will be an evil day for the Congress, if honest and determined fighters for freedom are asked to choose between the obligatory acceptance of a creed they do not believe in, and the freedom to leave the Congress. We shall never forfeit our intellectual independence, nor shall we voluntarily leave the organisation created by the masses of the Indian people. If for no other fault than the courage of our conviction and our devotion to the cause of Indian freedom, we shall ever be driven out of the Congress, then, the responsibility of weakening and destroying this organisation will belong to others.

I have spoken frankly,—with a heavy heart. I have made rather disagreeable and even bitter experience since I returned to this country with no other object than to place my services at the disposal of the great organisation leading our struggle for freedom. I have been looked upon with suspicion, treated as an outcaste, although I have the poor satisfaction of seeing some of my modest contributions going home, often much too belated and indirectly. I have spoken frankly, because I am speaking to a seeker of truth. Truth is not always beautiful, nor is the beautiful always true. Our country is passing through very fateful moments of its history. To-day its future is in the hand of the Congress. The leaders of the Congress, therefore, should be always conscious of this grave responsibility which can never be successfully discharged except with the aid of the

ugly truths of the situation. I and those Congressmen associated with me only want to help the Congress leaders discharge their responsibility. Blind obedience is not enough for that. We claim the right of approaching every problem according to our own lights, and offer our solutions, naturally hoping that they will be accepted when all other alternatives are found lacking. I presume you will appreciate the legitimacy as well as the honesty of this attitude, and do not doubt our motives.

Hoping to be excused for inflicting this long letter on you, but craving the indulgence of a comprehensive answer, I remain,

respectfully yours

Dehradun November 7, 1939. M. N. Roy

GANDHIJI'S REPLY TO M. N. ROY

In response to my suggestion in my article on the Congressman Shri M. N. Roy has sent a long letter not to Dr. Rajendra Prasad but to me. He asks for a public discussion of the points raised by him. Omitting the prefatory paragraphs which have no interest for the reader, the letter is reproduced elsewhere.

To take the ministerial resignations first, I feel sure that they have added to the prestige of the Congress. The Working Committee would no doubt have done better to have accepted my proposal, only if it could have assimilated non-violence with all the implications suggested by me. But the members of the Working Committee were too conscious of their duty to accept my proposal mechanically and without heart belief. The Working Committee's resolution was, therefore, the only true course for the Working Committee to adopt. Having done so, resignations were the logical result.

It would have been unbecoming to have retained office for the doubtful advantage of guarding civil liberty. If they were ministers of autonomous States, they could never have been ignored as they were about the war. Having been ignored, they would have been given satisfaction, when the attention of the British Government was drawn by the Working Committee to the grievous omission and when they were told how they could repair the mischief and retain India's co-operation in the prosecution of the war. The least that the ministers could do, therefore, was to resign if only to show the hollowness of autonomy. To remain in office after the discovery of their impotence would have been to court ignominy. To retain office for the protection of civil liberty would have been to mistake the wood for the tree. And Shri Roy may feel quite sure that the weakened ministers would have been poor guardians of civil liberty. The Governors would have set aside their decisions and caught hold of those whom they would have chosen to imprison. The

ministers had taken office principally to advance Independence. When they failed, they were bound to forget every other advantage however great in itself. And they can never go back to their offices so long as the demand of the Congress remains unsatisfied.

Civil disobedience is by no means the next inevitable forward step. It depends upon a variety of circumstances some of which I have already mentioned. Inaction is often the strategy of war—more so when the war is non-violent.

Now for the crucial point, non-violence is the central fact of the civil disobedience technique. It was in 1920 that the Congress hooked its politics deliberately to fundamental morals and vital social reforms. It came to the conclusion that Swaraj could not be won without non-violence and certain definite social reforms, viz. prohibition and removal of untouchability. It also put the charkha at the centre of its economic programme. Indeed it eschewed the then known political programme, i.e. the parliamentary. Hence the introduction of morals into Congress politics was not and is not irrelevant to the Congress fight for freedom. It is its core. There were a few grumblers then. But the vast majority welcomed the programme as the Congress had never done in the whole of its brilliant history. That programme justified itself by giving rise to a mass awakening on a phenomenal scale. By it the Congress gained an importance it had never before enjoyed. Shri Roy would not expect me at this stage to repeat here the argument that led to the enthusiastic acceptance of the programme. He should turn to the pages of "Young India" if he would know the pros and cons of the subject. The Congress became a mass democratic organisation from the time of acceptance of the programme, and it framed a democratic constitution which stands to this day without much material and fundamental alteration.

The Congress has a double function. It is a democratic organisation in peace time. It becomes a non-violent army in war time. In its second capacity it has no voting power. Its will is expressed by its general whoever he may be. Every unit has to tender him willing obedience in thought, word and deed. Yes, even in thought, since the fight is non-violent.

Sri Roy and other Congressmen do not need to be told

that I am not in the habit of losing co-workers. I go a long way with them in winning their affection and retaining it. But there does come a limit beyond which my compromise does not and cannot and should not go. No compromise is worth the name which endangers chances of success.

Segaon, 14-11-39

M. N. ROY'S REPLY TO GANDHIJI

Com. Roy issued the following statement from Dehradun regarding Gandhiji's reply to his letter :—

The publication of my letter will show that Gandhiji has treated serious matters superficially with impatience. His reply has conveyed the impression that I wrote only to criticise the resignation of the Congress Ministers. My contention was that resignation was useless, even harmful unless as a prelude to mass resistance. Since the present Congress policy does not contemplate mass resistance, resignation is an empty gesture which will have no effect. Gandhiji bears out my contention by repeating that there will be no mass resistance. His impatient and angry manner of treating fundamental issues will be answered in a fuller statement. Meanwhile I maintain that without formal resolutions of the Congress his categorical attitude has no constitutional validity.

M. N. ROY'S REJOINDER TO GANDHIJI

I have all along warned against the tendency of befogging the mind of the average Congressman with all sorts of apparently laudable considerations with the purpose of relegating the main issue of the capture of political power to the background. I have also exposed the process of the destruction of democracy inside the Congress and the desire to set up a system of moral violence on the pretext of making out of every Congressman what no human being can possibly be—absolutely non-violent in word, deed and thought. At last, I have been borne out by no less an authority than Gandhiji himself.

In his reply to my letter he categorically affirms that the threadbare "constructive programme", together with the impossible demand that every Congressman should be absolutely non-violent in thought, word and deed, should not only be given predominance in the Congress plan of activity, but that the political independence could be visualised only as the automatic consequence of the fulfilment of the so-called constructive programme and the attainment of the utopian moral ideal. Gandhiji also declares that the Congress should be subordinated to a dictatorship claiming absolute obedience not only in deed, but also in thought and word.

I have pointed out time and again that discipline, as conceived by the Congress leaders, rules out democracy. I have also exposed that their conception of democracy is hardly to be distinguished from authoritarianism. The obedience due to the Congress Dictator, according to Gandhiji, goes to the extent of abolishing not only the freedom of speech, but even of thought. With the freedom of thought the freedom of conscience also necessarily goes. What happens then to the morality of the Congress politics ?

Lately, Gandhiji has been expressing misgivings about the internal affairs of the Congress, and has been laying down rules for the conduct of every Congressman. He has also been insisting upon strict discipline necessary for the unity of the organisation. Searching the causes of indiscipline and disunity,

he recently expressed suspicion about the motive of the different groups of Congressmen who dare to hold dissenting views and advocate alternative policies. On behalf of the League of Radical Congressmen, I addressed to him a letter with the object of removing his suspicion as far as we are concerned. In addition to stating the well-known views of the League of Radical Congressmen, the letter drew Gandhiji's attention to the cause of the present deplorable state of affairs inside the Congress, which has been causing him misgivings. While the letter dealt mainly with fundamental issues, current political problems could not be left out, because the present deadlock in Congress politics is the logical consequence of the confusion of issues, and of the tendency I have all along exposed fearlessly, namely, the tendency of side-tracking the fight for political freedom and to hide that defeatist policy with a smoke-screen of moral sermons and bombastic phrases.

The controversy has not been initiated by me. Gandhiji suspected the loyalty of a certain type of Congressmen. Our reply was given in self-defence. I gave straight-forward answers to a number of rather insinuating questions. It was also an appeal to Gandhiji to look for causes of the evils where they are to be really found. He replies to my appeal with impatience and anger. He practically orders me out of the Congress.

I shall not be so easily provoked. I do not regard the Congress as the private property of any particular group, however sincere or devoted it many be. I do not believe that the Congress is the creation of any single individual and, therefore, should always conform with his ideas. The Congress is the creation of the Indian masses, objectively involved in a struggle against foreign Imperialism and native reaction. I have been participating in that struggle for a much longer time than many of the present leaders of the Congress. I have also suffered and sacrificed, though I have not received, nor have I hankered for, so much publicity. Therefore, so long as the Congress remains the organ of the struggle for the freedom of the Indian masses, I belong to it. But I refuse to submit myself to any self-constituted dictatorship. Internal democracy is the lifebreath of an organisation fighting for freedom and de-

mocracy. The life of the Congress should not be stifled in an atmosphere of moral coercion and non-violent Fascism. That was the burden of my letter which has angered Gandhiji. But the truth must be told. I have said it. I must stand by it. The issues are joined. They must be fought out. The last word belongs not to any self-constituted dictator, but to the rank and file of the Congress.

I have always pointed out the contradiction between the political programme of the Congress and what has come to be known as its creed—its so-called sheet-anchor. I have showed the contradiction to be so grave as to necessitate the rejection of one or the other. I have maintained that the growing tendency to attach greater importance to the creed implied the repudiation of the political programme. Gandhiji's reply makes it clear that is the position. I am not prepared to take it for granted. The Congress must be given an opportunity to discuss the issue thoroughly and express its verdict. If the verdict be in favour of Gandhiji's position, then, the Congress will cease to be an organ for the struggle of the political freedom and social emancipation of the Indian masses. Consequently, it may no longer be worth while to defend it against the evil of authoritarianism and the danger of reformism, until that is clear, the battle must be fought to the last ditch.

I have criticised the introduction of the so-called creed from two points of view. In the first place, it limits the scope of the struggle for the attainment of the declared goal of complete independence. While pointing that out, I always insisted that the issue is not violence versus non-violence. Rejection of the cult of non-violence does not necessarily commit the movement to violence. It is a matter of perspective. Morever, the point I insisted upon was that for a political organisation the programme should be purely political, free from all other considerations. I categorically reject the point of view that politics by itself is not moral. If freedom is not a moral ideal, then morality is an empty word, which may be used only for the purpose of suppressing freedom, collective as well as individual.

The second reason of my opposing the so-called creed of the Congress is that it has never been adopted by the Congress

as a whole. For that reason, it cannot be binding for Congressmen. It is an undeniably democratic principle that members of an organisation always have the right to demand and agitate for the revision even of its previous decisions. The right to oppose the imposition of an uncritical acceptance of certain ideas, and subordination to the corresponding rules of conduct, in the absence of a previous resolution of the organisation, is still greater. In criticising the creed and opposing its dictatorial enforcement, I have done nothing more than exercised an indisputable democratic right.

To-day Gandhiji demands not only absolute non-violence in thought, word and deed ; there must be an equally absolute obedience to a dictatorship which claims to be moral. But even he cannot alter the fact that his proposition to amend the Congress constitution in that sense was rejected by a Plenary Session of the Congress. So long as that fact remains, the creed, whatever may be its intrinsic merit, is not binding on Congressmen. It is not permissible to test the loyalty of Congressmen by that standard. Yet, on the strength of his dictatorship he demands implicit obedience as regards the acceptance of the creed. Before he can lay that claim, the matter must be submitted to a Plenary Session of the Congress or to a referendum of the entire membership.

Then, I protest against the dictatorship itself, set up on the pretext of a "war" which does not exist, and will most probably never take place, if the dictatorship could avoid it. And since the dictatorship is non-violent, a real "war" will never take place. That being the case, there is absolutely no reason to abolish formally the internal democracy of the Congress, already destroyed in practice, on the pretext of an imaginary "war time". Implicit obedience in a period of decisive action may be a tolerable proposition. But to be absolutely obedient in inaction will be to commit suicide, politically as well as spiritually. Congressmen should have the right to do so or not.

Intelligent people cannot be impressed by the epigramme "Inaction is often the most effective action". As a matter of fact inaction is death. The present policy of the Congress is killing its political life. The policy logically follows from the

"fundamental morals and vital social reforms", to which, according to Gandhiji, "the Congress hooked its politics deliberately" ever since 1920. That is my contention. I demand that the Congress should break away from those moorings which rigidly circumscribe its radius of activity. A decision must be made in the light of twenty years' experience. The proper authority to do so is the Congress as a whole. If in 1920 it was permissible for the Congress to open up a new chapter in its history, who would deny it the same right to open up still another new chapter in 1940? I maintain that, unless it does so, it will be demoralised, and disintegrate. Let the Congress as a whole choose its future course. Why should the dictators hound out of the Congress all those who try to defend the democratic right of the membership?

Since Gandhiji's reply, apart from my contention that there is a clash of fundamental issues, tries to confuse the situation by laying greater importance on the difference regarding the resignation of Congress Ministries, a few words in that connection should be said. Even in this connection he makes a confession which gives his whole case away. He admits that his close associates and most trusted lieutenants composing the Congress Working Committee themselves have not "assimilated non-violence with all the implications suggested by me." It is not the first time that he makes this significant admission. As a matter of fact, on several occasions, he had admitted that he himself has not come up to the ideal standard. How could, then, he insist upon perfection on the part of the millions of ordinary men and women who constitute the Congress? If it takes a man like him more than a whole life's time to come up to the standard, it cannot be expected that the Congress as a whole, or even a sufficient number of individual Congressmen, will ever fulfil the condition which he lays down as necessary for initiaing a struggle for freedom.

The strange conception of the morality of putting the cart before the horse is killing the Congress politically. The resignation of the Ministries cannot have any other significance than an empty gesture, made for saving face. Therefore, I could not approve of it. Even before the step was taken, I said that no useful purpose would be served by the resignation of

the Congress Ministries except as a prelude to a mass struggle. Since Gandhiji was so categorically of the opinion that the country was not prepared for such a struggle, he could not consistently advise the resignation of Congress Ministries. His justification in no way answers our contention.

Gandhiji's arguments in this connection only reveal that the decision to accept office was based on false premises. To-day, he argues that "when they (Ministers) failed to advance independence, they were bound to forego every other advantage, however great in itself." But during all this time in office, the Ministers have been working exactly on the contrary principle. It was maintained that every little advantage gained through ministerialist activities would ultimately contribute to the cause of freedom. From that false premises, it was deduced that anything that embarrassed the Ministries was harmful for the struggle for freedom. With that specious plea, all political activities on the part of Congressmen were forbidden. If in this crisis, the Ministries stood naked in their weakness, the responsibility for that should be shouldered by the leadership of the Congress. And now to shirk the responsibility of defending civil liberty on the pretext of that weakness, is as good as to maintain that two wrongs make one right. The resignation of the Congress Ministries, before making a determined effort to utilise their position for preventing the complete destruction of civil liberty on the pretext of a war situation, is an act of sheer desertion. It does not enhance the prestige of the Congress. It reveals weakness.

Gandhiji argues that it "would have been to court ignominy" if the Congress Ministries had remained in office after they had "been ignored about the war". Why then did they not resign earlier? Besides, that was not the only occasion on which Congress Ministries were ignored. But the fact is, as Gandhiji himself reveals, that, even after they were so ignored, the Congress Ministries continued in office because the Working Committee wanted the British Government to rectify the mistake of the "the grievous omission" and thus "retain India's co-operation in the prosecution of the war." Nothing could be more ignominous than to take up that attitude of capitulation, though veiled in words of dignity and power. As soon as the

British Government found that the Congress was eager to avoid a struggle, it took advantage of the weakness and refused to make any responsive gesture. Thus out-manoeuvered by its own eagerness to avoid a struggle, the Working Committee was forced to make an ineffective gesture, hoping at least to save its face. That is the implication of the resignation of Congress Ministers and no *post factum* justification can make it appear otherwise.

Finally, one more point must be belaboured so that there may not be any misunderstanding. I advocate neither violence nor immorality, when we maintain that all considerations on these scores are irrelevant for the political programme of the Congress. I demand a radical change of the present Congress policy, not because it is non-violent and moral, but because it is ineffective and bankrupt. Its ineptitude and bankruptcy stand out to day more crassly than ever before. Hence the necessity for a new leadership, which means a radical change of policy, not necessarily of the personnel, confronts the Congress. It must face the issue if it wants to live and triumph as the leader of the Indian people's struggle for freedom. Let the Congress decide.

Appendix—II

M. K. GANDHI

About a year ago in a conversation with the head of an important Gandhi Ashram, I remarked that I appreciated Gandhiji's greatness better than any of his ardent admirers. My interviewer was very much surprised to hear me say so. Had I not been a critic of Gandhiji's philosophical views and often of his political actions? Do I not refuse to be a blind follower even now when, in the capacity of a loyal Congressman, I am a habitual wearer of *Khaddar* and accept the creed of the Congress? Do 1 not even to-day dare to differ from Gandhiji when my conscience and intelligent judgment prompt me to do so? How then could I have made the above remark? There was no reason for me to be hypocritical. I am too notorious to seek rehabilitation; too marked to sail under false colours.

The above remark was made with all sincerity, and I still stand by it. Yet, my interviewer was so very surprised by it as to ask me if the news could be passed on to others. My consent was freely and unreservedly given.

What was the reason of the surprise, which most probably is shared by many others? The reason is the inability to understand that criticism does not exclude appreciation. Blind faith and servile obedience are not only debasing for those who possess those questionable virtues, but debase the object of worship itself. In order to appreciate properly the historical significance of the personality of Gandhiji and the role that he has played in our struggle for freedom, one must be free from emotion and try to see things in the revealing light of criticism. But there is a wrong notion about criticism itself. It is confounded with antagonism. Hence the inability to understand the value of critical appreciation.

I am not a blind follower of anybody. I do not take anything for granted. Before I accept any doctrine, I submit it to a critical analysis, which is to test the consistency of its internal logic. If I find it self-contradictory, I have no hesitation in re-

jecting it however exalted may be the authority. But in the process of the analytical examination, the behaviour of certain persons, or a certain doctrine may reveal certain positive features which must be retained and admired even when the claims of the person and the doctrine as a whole, are to be rejected. That has been my approach to the personality, activity and the teachings of Gandhiji. And I claim to have found greater values in them than are known to the blind followers or uncritical admirers.

In my opinion, Gandhiji will go down in history neither as a prophet nor as a saviour of the masses, but as their political awakener. Gandhiji's exalted place in the political history of contemporary India is created by the masses. I do not share the view that our struggle for freedom ever since 1920 is the creation of Mahatma Gandhi. On the contrary, "Mahatma Gandhi" is a creation of the Indian masses. It is a remarkable historical phenomenon. Every realistic student of history must appreciate the role of Mahatma Gandhi as such, unless they would allow emotionalism to mislead them into wilful misinterpretation of history. Why did the Indian masses hail Mahatma Gandhi as their liberator while many other men had been in the field before him trying for the honour? The reason is that he could speak in a language understood by the masses. But unfortunately, the understanding of the masses of our country is still on a very low level. One had to stoop to that level in order to raise it higher. To have the courage to do so, is a token of greatness. Generally, one feels to have paid the greatest homage to Gandhiji, when he is given the credit of mobilizing the masses in the struggle for freedom. One does not know that the greater homage would be to regard and respect Gandhiji as the embodiment of the primitive, blind, spontaneous spirit of revolt of the Indian masses. His politics has been characterized by the immaturity, defects and deficiency of the source of the urge behind it. One can be only as great as himself. To ascribe to him any greater greatness, is to worship the God of your own creation—the kind of God who is sure to disappoint you any moment by showing his clay feet. I am not such a stupid worshipper. Therefore, I claim to appreciate the real greatness of Gandhiji.

The conflict of views regarding the appreciation of the role of Gandhiji, can be traced back to the contradictory philosophies of history. Many in our country still believe that history is the biography of great men. But since the days of Carlyle, history has become a science. Today, it knows neither prophets, nor miracles, nor socio-political alchemy. Great men are no longer regarded either as *avatars,* demigods or super-men. Great men are great in so far as they represent the spirit of their respective age. Gandhiji will remain great as long as he represents the spirit of revolt of the Indian people. Therefore, his greatness cannot be unlimited. The spirit of revolt of the Indian people will grow until their conditions of life are so radically changed as would permit the development of any single human being into a "superman." Gandhiji's philosophy would not permit such tumultuous development of the spirit of revolt. However serviceable it may have been in the past, his personality and his activities may become injurious for the liberation of the Indian people in the future. That perspective should have been clear from the very beginning of his career to anybody who did not permit his intellect to be befogged by emotion. I claim to have been one of them. But having no illusion regarding the scene to be enacted at the end of the drama, I could admire wholeheartedly the action of the great actor when he strode across the stage in the previous scenes. He may still develop useful possibilities. Or he may not. No definite judgment need be pronounced as yet. Meanwhile, let us admire, respect and properly appreciate him for the great services that he has rendered to the struggle for freedom of the Indian people.

M. N. Roy

—*Independent India* October 16, 1938

Appendix—III

THE MESSAGE OF THE MARTYR

Leaders of aggrieved India have professed unswerving loyalty to the sacred memory of the martyred Mahatma and pledged themselves solemnly to be guided by his message. If the pledge is implemented, then death at the assassin's hand may still accomplish what a dedicated life could not. There is no doubt about the sincerity of sentiments felt in an atmosphere of poignant anguish and expressed spontaneously from the bottom of hearts moved by a dreadful experience. At the same time, it cannot be denied that, had nationalist India grasped the Mahatma's message and been guided by it without reservation, today she would not be mourning his death at the hands of an assassin. Therefore, having recovered from the initial impact of the stunning blow, the country should even now try to understand the meaning of the Mahatma's msesage, if his martyrdom is not to be in vain.

Even during his lifetime, the Mahatma was hailed as the Father of the Nation. Nationalist India's homage to his sacred memory will be to canonise him as such. He was the patron saint of nationalism, which triumphed during his lifetime. Yet he fell a victim to the very cult he preached. That is the implication of terrible tragedy which stupefied the entire civilized world. But few seem to have learned the lesson. The patron saint of nationalism has been sacrificed at the altar of the geographical goddess of *Akhand Hindustan*, and all Indian nationalists, who today reaffirm undying loyalty to the Mahatma, also worship at the shrine of that goodees. Since that fanatical cult logically goes to the incredible extent of demanding the blood of its own patron saint, the Mahatma's message must have been greater than a mere call for suffering and sacrifice for the country. Essentially, it is a moral, humanist, cosmopilitan appeal, although the Mahatma himself allowed it to be heaviy coloured by the narrow cult of nationalism. The lesson of the martyrdom of the Mahatma is that the noblest core of his message

could not be reconciled with the intolerant cult of nationalism, which he also preached. Unfortunately this contradiction in his ideas and ideals was not realised by the Mahatma himself until the last days of his life. During that period, he was a disillusioned soul, full of sorrow, struggling bravely against the growing feeling of frustration with an apparently stout optimism based on the sand of an archaic faith.

The doctrine of non-violence represented an effort to introduce morality in political practice. But in the Mahatma, the politician often got the better of the moralist. Personally he may never have deviated from his principles, or faith, as he preferred to call it. Yet, he allowed, or condoned, compromise in the political practice and personal conduct of his followers. Even that he did not do willingly. His codes of morality appeared so very dogmatic to others that they often could not observe them without surrendering judgment. Except in some quaint details, the moral codes preached by the Mahatma are unobjectionable. As a moralist, he followed the footprints of the religious preachers of the past; and therefore his codes were bound to appear dogmatic in the rationalist atmosphere of our time. Instead of rejecting them on the specious plea of practical political pragmatism, one should provide them with a secular and rationalist sanction. Utilitarianism is not the only alternative to intuitional or transcendental morality.

The implication of the doctrine of non-violence is the moral dictum that the end does not justify the means. That is the core of the Mahatma's message—which is not compatible with power-politics. The Mahatma wanted to purify politics; that can be done only by raising political practice above the vulgar level of a scramble for power. But for this, nationalist India today would not be intoxicated with the idea of having a strong army—an idea which logically spells the danger of war. In the atmosphere of this intoxication, it is blasphemous to pledge unswerving loyalty to the message of non-violence and peace preached by the Mahatma.

Nationalism, heavily tainted by Hindu orthodoxy, bred Muslim communalism. Therefore, the ideal of Hindu-Muslim unity, placed before the country by the Mahatma, could not be attained. The failure in this respect must have been the grea-

test blow for the Mahatma. During his last days, he staked his life for restoring communal harmony. He failed. Where he failed, smaller men with less lofty motive will not succeed. Nationalism is heading towards its nemesis. The cosmopolitan (non-communal) and humanist message of the Mahatma was never so urgently needed by India as today. Caught in the vicious circle of the contradiction of his ideas and ideals, the Mahatma could not see the limitation of nationalism before it was too late. Will his martyrdom open the eyes of his followers? Will they know how to honour his sacred memory? That can be done by acting according to his message, more boldly than he dared himself.

The Mahatma's place of honour in history will not be that of a patron-saint of nationalism which, in power, is bound to go against the moral and humanist essence of his message. He will be remembered for having vaguely visualized a humanist idea, while still groping in the twilight of mediaevalism. Primarily a religious man he set before his followers high ideals which could not possibly be attained unless the human spirit broke out of the charmed circle of the religious mode of thought. Therefore, like all other religious prophets of morality, peace and human brotherhood, the Mahatma was destined to fail in his mission. Communal harmony is not possible in the mediaeval atmosphere of religious orthodoxy and fanaticism. The ideal of individual liberty is precluded by nationalism, which is a totalitarian cult. In the absence of individual freedom, humanism is an unattainable idea. The inspiring vision of a peaceful human brotherhood is bound to be eclipsed by the ambition of making the nation great, prosperous and powerful. It would be idle to pledge loyalty to the message of the Mahatma unless it meant realization of its contradictions and an intelligent resolve to place the moral and humanist core of his teachings above the carnal cult of nationalism and power-politics. Otherwise, the Mahatma will have worn the crown of martyrdom in vain.

M. N. Roy

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Appendix—IV

MR GANDHI : AN ANALYSIS—I

by Santi Devi (alias Evelyn Roy)

And so, Mahatma Gandhi, variously described as "the greatest apostle of nonviolence since the days of Buddha and Jesus", "the prophet of spiritualised democracy", and "the greatest man of the world", is in jail, condemned to six years' incarceration by the very judge who in passing sentence paid tribute to him as "a great patriot and a great leader, and even those who differed from you in politics look up to you as a man of high ideals and a leading noble and even saintly like". It is not the purpose of this article to add or detract from the praise that has been heaped upon the head of this unique leader of Indian nationalism.

Rather it is aimed to estimate as carefully and impartially as may be the essential qualities of Gandhi the saint, philosopher, politician and patriot as applied to present-day Indian conditions and to derive what valuable lessons we may from his failures as well as successes of the past three years.

Gandhi the Saint

No one can know of the life and personality of Mr. Gandhi and fail to render tribute to him as "a saintly man who purifies us at sight". In an age of intense individualism, of uncompromising struggle for existence, in which national, racial and class conflicts are hardening for the final battle that will usher a new era of social relationships and civilisation, the golden legend of this idealist and ascetic who has carefully given his whole life in the service of his fellows, upon whose personal character no faintest blemish rests, whose fearless courage and love of truth stand proven before the whole world and who combines the naive purity and innocence of a child with the iron will and unbending principles of a man, such a character will go down in history with the same moral force upon posterity as those saintly prototypes of the past, Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis

of Assisi. Gandhi the individual has impressed, individually, thousands of lives who are uplifted and inspired to better things for having known him. His personal example gives force to his moral precepts, for no man can say of him that he does not practise all that he preaches. And it is this moral force of his, dimly radiating beyond the confines of vast India to the indifferent world beyond, which has brought him into prominence as a figure of international interest. Gandhi the philosopher, the politician and patriot is but one of many on this storm-tossed sea of Indian nationalism, unknown and uncared for by the heedless nation who have long since learned not to tread on the tail of British imperialism. But Gandhi the saint—here is a spectacle unique in every age, and as one of the great men cast up by the waters of time, he belongs to every country.

Here is in this half-naked, slender, brown body so completely dominated by the mind within, a strength that dreadnoughts cannot conquer nor machineguns subdue though they shatter it to bits, and out of the respect bred of this certain knowledge, the British empire leaves him unharmed. Six years' simple imprisonment, "with everything possible to make him comfortable", is the utmost they dare attempt, and this merely to remove him from the arena of active politics. When the storm dies down a little, they will let him free. For they will soon learn, if they do not already know, that Gandhi the saint in prison becomes to India's adoring millions Gandhi the martyr and from the days of the Roman empire onward, the spectacle of martyrdom as exercised a potent and irresistible effect upon the mass mind. It is well and truly said that, "Mahatma in jail is more powerful than Mahatma free", not alone for the constant impetus it gives to Indian nationalism by working upon the sympathetic indignation of the masses, but because in jail his qualities of sainthood can radiate at their fullest and best unconjested by the exercise of those more worldly faculties of political leadership in which Mr. Gandhi is not so conspicuously successful.

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